

Dinner Directions for Disciples

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[0 : 00] So we're going to be looking at Jesus' dinner directions to his disciples. And it is in two parts. This morning we're going to see Jesus' directions to those who are invited to a banquet, to dinner.

And then this evening we're going to look at those who are dinner hosts. And there is a difference, there is a difference, a big difference, by our Master Jesus, the Lord of all hosts, between entertaining and hospitality and hosting.

And I hope you see that this evening when you return and join us again. I am preaching out of an ESV, English Standard Version, very, very similar to your Pew Bibles, the New International Version.

So you might be struck that there are a few little differences, but there are no material differences. There are just a few differences of language, but it's the same truth.

This morning, as you look at these scriptures, we're going to find that Jesus is at a banquet. And it's important to observe Jesus observing others.

[1 : 17] You never know when you go to a banquet, you never know who you're going to sit next to. Now you may strategically, as you get into the room, try to choose your seat and position yourself, because you're going to be together for an hour, sometimes hour and a half to two hours.

So you want to pick the person that you're sitting next to for the conversation, the table fellowship. Well, Wendy and I were running a bit late, my fault. We were, a couple of years ago, invited to a fundraising banquet with a special speaker.

And I really was keenly interested in hearing this special speaker. His name was little known to me, but his stepfather, C.S. Lewis, was.

It was Douglas Gresham. And he had been invited as a special speaker to come and to talk about his stepfather and life growing up in the household of his mother, Joy Davidson, and his stepfather, C.S. Lewis, who adopted Douglas Gresham upon his marriage to Joy.

Well, we were running a little bit late. We get there. They've got the round table set up, and you can smell the rubber chicken cooking. It's always the same entree, at least in America. It's a kind of tasteless chicken with a few oversteamed vegetables on the side.

[2 : 43] And so we were trying to see where we were to seat. And our hostess came over. She says, listen, just you can sit anywhere you like because a number of people, I think it was snowing that day, because of the weather, a number of people have had to cancel.

They're not going to be able to come. Well, the seats from the back, the tables from the back had already started to fill up, so I couldn't get my desired position of sitting way in the back. So I had to keep moving forward.

And finally, I saw sitting by himself at a table this fellow who was rather plainly dressed. And I said, Wendy, let's sit next to this guy.

He looks interesting. So we sat down, and we started a conversation. And I started the conversation, as I often do, about his shoes.

He wore these almost knee-high boots with the straps that you pull, and his pants was tucked into the boots. They were farm boots. And I thought, yeah, fellow, you're kind of like me.

[3 : 48] You know, we dress that way when the weather's bad. And so we get in this conversation, and I said, that's really unusual. What do you do?

He says, well, I'm a sheep farmer. Well, this is Utah, one of the few places in America that we have sheep. And so I got to talking to him about sheep and not knowing anything about them, and was just enthralled.

And I said, well, where's your home? And he says, well, actually, I don't live here in America. I'm from New Zealand. And I said, really? That is fascinating. And that time, the moderator stood up, and he says, and now I'd like to introduce our special speaker tonight, Douglas Gresham.

And the guy I was sitting next to stood up and went up and spoke. You never know who you're going to sit next to. I count that as one of my prized and treasured memories.

That dinner, not so much the food, but the fellowship that I had at the table with Douglas Gresham before I knew who he was.

[4 : 58] I think I would have been a little different if the seat arrangements had been such that you're sitting at the head table, and you're sitting next to the main speaker. I think I might have positioned myself differently.

I might have shown a few of my credentials or kind of flashed my ministerial resume. But as it were, I talked about cows, which I know a little bit about.

He talked about sheep, which he knows a whole lot about. I just regret that I never got to talk about C.S. Lewis. But he talked about that in his talk. Now, Jesus is at a dinner.

Now, this dinner is on the Sabbath. So that means a couple of things. If you look in your scripture, I want you to see and notice this morning three things in the time that remains.

I want you to notice, number one, I want you to notice a man who's at the dinner, but he's not invited to stay for dinner. And secondly, I want you to notice those who were invited to dinner.

[6 : 06] And then lastly, I want you to see the gospel. With all my heart, I want you to see the gospel of the wedding feast this morning. Notice the man who was at the dinner party, but not invited to stay for dinner.

It is the Sabbath. Church is over. And the pastor, as it were, the head pastor, the ruling Pharisee, is hosting lunch.

Now, that means all the dinner preparations would have been prepared the day before. They would not lift one finger in labor for dinner preparations.

Jesus is invited. And I find it remarkable that he accepted the invitation. Because he knew that it was a setup. But even for those that are either suspicious or even yet enemies, Jesus will accept every invitation for fellowship with them.

And that should actually temper what you're going to read in a few moments because it makes it almost look like Jesus is showing up and he's grumpy and he's angry. No, he knows that true compassion and true love is going for the real disease of pride and selfishness inside rather than simply the exterior diseases.

[7 : 39] And so he'll go after these Pharisees in just a moment. We'll see that. But he's at this dinner. And it says there in verse 1 that they were watching him carefully.

Now, notice the man who was not invited to dinner. I want to show you an image. Now, this is out of France. It's ancient or old church art.

And this is a depiction of Jesus when he's first at this dinner party. Now, I want you to notice a couple of things about this image, this artistry.

First of all, look at the eyes of the Pharisees. Now, you can tell which one is Jesus because he always had a halo. You know, I mean, he always has a halo.

He's divine. Now, notice the eyes. Where are the eyes of the Pharisees looking? They're not looking at the man with his illness of dropsy or edema.

[8 : 42] He's got what's called hydropsy. His body, the fluids of his body will settle either in his stomach or his lower limbs.

That's why he's on a couch. He can't, he's not very mobile. This man may very well have been brought in by the Pharisees on that sedan, placed central to this dinner party.

And they're watching to see what Jesus will do. Now, they're not watching the man with compassion. They're watching Jesus with suspicion, even hatred, because it's the Sabbath.

Luke is already recorded in this gospel three occasions where Jesus healed on the Sabbath. And that is breaking the law.

Notice what Jesus has in his hands. In his left hand, he's holding a book. That book represents Torah, the law of Moses, the Ten Commandments.

[9 : 56] Honor the Sabbath and keep it holy. No labor. But, nowhere in the law of Moses, which Jesus said, I've come to fulfill or complete the law.

Not abolish it, but complete it. Where it needs fulfilling, then it will graduate into what Paul says is the law of love.

Jesus loves the law. And in his left hand, he's holding the law, but nowhere in the law did it forbid healing on the Sabbath.

But the Pharisees have a problem. They don't want to go soft on law enforcement and labor on a Sunday. But they also don't want to be seen as uncompassionate toward this man.

So they had a test. And the test was this. Is his life at stake? And that test was seen in what they called the bury, bury, bury rule.

[11 : 09] Jesus will say, and he quotes it to them. He says in verse 5, Which of you having a son or an ox that's fallen into a well on a Sabbath will not immediately pull it out?

The word for son, bury, sounds like the word for ox, bera, which sounds like the word for well or pit, bera.

And so Jesus is quoting their own law contained in the Mishnah, their own commentary on God's Torah by saying, Listen, you know the son ox whale rule?

Look at the foot of this man's couch. At the foot of his couch is a well or a pit. Open wells were very common in Palestine. I remember growing up, I grew up in a rural environment, that there were a lot of old farmsteads where the people had long moved away.

The homes were even turned into mini barns to store hay because the barn had long fallen in. And I was always cautioned as I would ramble with my brothers or my cousins.

[12 : 26] Whenever we had free time, we would just go across the environment. We'd look for these places and we would just play around these old barns and dilapidated houses.

And my father always warned us, First thing that you do on site, find the well. Find the well. Because the structure would have deteriorated and now you have this open pit.

And if you fall in and you're by yourself, you won't be able to get out. You'll die there. And if you do fall in, you're with your young brothers and cousins, they may not be able to get you out.

And you'll die there. Unless they're able to come and get help. Jesus was looking at this man with dropsy. And he said, It may not be a terminal illness that this man has.

His life may not be threatened. But the law of the Lord is to look with compassion upon all image bearers. And where we can show love, even healing to their wounds, we shall do so.

[13 : 40] Jesus challenges them at that point. But notice in verse 4, He took him, he healed him, and then he sent him away.

I actually think he was doing the man to kindness by saying, Hey, listen, you don't have to stay with dinner with this crowd. You can, you're now free. Before I leave this, by the way, How did they know that he was healed?

I think two things. Number one, I do believe that if he had these swollen joints, even an extended stomach because of the fluids, that that would have changed.

It would have gone away. For those of you who are already contemplating New Year's resolutions and weight loss programs, this is a good one. Number two, the man would have stood on his own, and he would have walked out, and he would have been free.

But this would have been a conundrum for the Pharisees. For you see, they associated dropsy with immorality.

[14 : 54] So Jesus' healing of him is to say that no longer is he to be marked out, sidelined, and seen as someone who's unworthy for your table fellowship, who's unworthy to be in your home.

The only reason he was in that home was for them to confront Jesus. I would think that he would think forever, even into eternity, the day that he was brought into that home to set up Jesus because he came under Jesus' touch and his love.

Secondly, I want you to notice those who were invited to dinner. Imagine this outdoor wedding scene.

Jesus says here that in verse 7, Luke says this. He says, he told a parable to those who were invited when he noticed how they chose their places.

Wedding scenes, particularly those in the U.S., there's always a head table. Now this table would have been one not to sit at, but it was called a triclinum.

[16 : 12] Tri, three sides like a U. Clinum in that you would recline, and who you were reclining on to the right was very important.

At the center of that U, in the middle of that U, that was the best position. Normally reserved for the host or the very, very, very special guest.

Then to the right and then to the left, remember the disciples saying, Lord, I want to sit on the right or let me sit on the left. Either one, doesn't matter. Those were the prime positions.

And then descending to the host left, because that was the natural way to turn the head. Those were the prime positions. If you were simply on the right post, the first one on the right, you began to get more and more to kitty seating.

You began to get more and more toward those that were not quite as large in their status. So, you're invited to a wedding.

[17 : 20] You're given your seat or you're assigned your seating. And your eyes will always go to the head table. Does that give you pleasure when you're not seated at the head table?

Do you look at those seated in those positions of influence or attention, attraction, and rejoice or do you grumble?

Now, it may not be a wedding banquet. It may not be a dinner. It may not be a dinner party. It may be a position at work. It may be possessions.

It may be some status in my neighborhood or my club. It may be beauty or physical health. It may be something that to look at me shows my importance.

Soren Kierkegaard said this in *Sickness Leading Unto Death*. It is the normal state of the human heart to build its identity around something besides God.

[18 : 30] Ever in search of something special to give it meaning and purpose and life without God. All of us have an ego.

That ego is my inner self. That inner self, my identity. And it is hungry.

It's hungry for meaning. It's hungry for purpose. It's hungry for attention that gives it a sense of value and meaning.

I make a difference here. Ego tries to fill itself, satiate itself. It's hunger appetite because it's very, very busy.

It's always looking around that triclinalum. It's always looking. We can say that U-shaped table is a U. U-shaped table. It's always looking to position itself.

[19 : 33] And the way it feeds itself is by comparison. By comparison. I may not be, I may not sit at the head of the table, but as long as I'm one step higher than you, then I'm better than you.

I have, I'm superior to you. And that feeds our ego. You know, we say someone hurt my feelings.

Well, feelings don't, feelings are not a live thing. What we really mean is someone hurt my ego. They stepped on my ego.

Or my ego is hungry and empty. We're always comparing. We're always comparing.

And that just doesn't quite satiate my ego. Why? Because even though I'm always comparing, I see others that I'm falling short of when I compare myself to them.

[20 : 51] I may be richer than one person, but then this person is richer than me. And so like a wheel, it just continues to go around. And the product of that is not only envy, but discontent.

Let me give you two tests. Number one, how do you react when you're criticized?

How do you react when you're criticized? Jesus tells this parable because he's looking. He's, he's there. And I don't believe he's seated himself yet, but he's looking and he's seeing people at the dinner party jockey for a position.

And when he sees them, how they choose their power positions to be noticed, to feed their ego. You know, they're, they're not there at the dinner party because they're there for the food and they're there for the fellowship.

They're there because of their pride. They want to be able to, to go back and say, I sat next to so-and-so. But notice when they're corrected, when they're criticized, when they're asked by the host or the master of the banquet to change their seat, what do they do?

[22 : 09] It says that they give your place to this person and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. They feel shame.

I dare say that many of us, when we're criticized, particularly when we feel like we've done the right thing or when we've done what we, we've done the best that we could, or maybe we did a job that nobody else would do and then somebody comes along and they criticize me.

We feel embarrassment. We feel shame. And that brings on these feelings of anger, resentment. Our ego. Our ego is taking a blow.

Something that was feeding my ego, even in a subtle way, shows up for what it is when I'm criticized. Secondly, can you celebrate those that are sitting at the head table?

Can you rejoice with those that rejoice? Can you applaud those? Can you give honor? Would you, what if you sat down, not because you were jockeying for a position, and someone said, hey pal, you're at the kiddie table.

[23 : 24] This guy over here, this gal over here, she's going to be giving your place. Would you say, right on! Cool! Great! Man, that's a cool seat. That's a great seat.

Hey, I'll see you later. Where is it? Oh, next to the bathroom over here. Can you rejoice? That's an indication that you actually are at the banquet, at this feast, for the right reason.

A banquet and a feast represented not simply good food and cuisine. What it represented was fellowship with the host.

It represented here, Jesus is talking about the kingdom and the way the kingdom operates. It represents salvation.

To be invited to the party, to be invited to the dinner, to be invited to the wedding banquet is an invitation to come into the kingdom. But to attend is an invitation to have fellowship with the head of the dinner party as well as all of the other guests.

[24 : 38] But we can't take that kind of pleasure if I'm stroking my pride and looking to feed my ego. And Jesus is looking at these folks and He's saying, Wow, you're not here for others to enjoy them or to even to serve them and to rejoice with them and to celebrate with them.

You're just here for yourself. Lastly, I want you to see, I want you to see the gospel. I want you to notice the gospel of the wedding feast because that's what He is talking about here.

He tells this parable, He says in verse 8, when you're invited to a wedding feast, a wedding feast is going to be different than many other banquets.

What is the gospel? The best place that I can find the gospel as well as position it in this text is in Philippians 2.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit. In other words, don't feed your ego. But in humility, count others as more significant than yourselves.

[26 : 01] Take the low seat. Let each one of you look not only to his own interest but also to the interest of others. Be content where you are.

Celebrate others. Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men.

He left his high seat of heaven. He took the lowest seat, the seat of a servant on earth. And being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross.

Therefore God has exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Here's the gospel. Jesus left his high seat of heaven took the lowest seat by becoming a man and dying on a cross at the hands of men in our place so that we could take a high seat at this wedding banquet of the Lamb in future glory of heaven and the new earth.

[27 : 35] That's the gospel. And what does God do? God takes Christ from that very lowest seat and he raises him to the highest of all seats.

He's at the head table. We have a seat at that table. That's the gospel by our faith in Jesus Christ. Let me ask you a question as I end.

What would give you what would give you the humility of spirit? What would give you the poise to go and sit in the lowest place?

When we leave today you're going to have opportunities in the course of this next week I dare say to either take the high place jockey for position or take the low place.

What would cause you to lean in toward the low place? And I'm not talking about a low self-esteem unworthy unworthy and I'm not talking about self-pity but I'm talking about pleasure.

[29 : 02] I'm happy to really happy to not some pious fake. I'm happy to take the low seat. I have confidence. I really don't care what people think about me and not some kind of false bravado.

But you know I'm not bothered really. What would cause us? How do we get there? Well it's like the little boy in Sunday school class who was asked children what's gray and furry has a furry tail and he stores up nuts he lives in the trees and he stores up nuts for the winter.

Little boy ooh ooh ooh I know he's like Johnny what's the answer? He says Jesus and so what do you mean Jesus? Well the answer is always Jesus in Sunday school the gospel is the answer the hope the promise and the confident expectation that your host your master your lord of the wedding feast he knows where you're sitting he knows you he knows your need to be loved and known and recognized and affirmed he knows that he knows where you're sitting at the table and you're at the table and he knows you're just glad to be there you're just glad to be there you don't have to sit at Jesus right or left you're just glad to be at the feast it's a wedding it's a wedding between the lamb

Jesus Christ and his church the saints and I'm there and one day he's going to come to each of us and he's going to speak the gospel to us he's not going to say servant he's not going to say simply disciple he's going to say friend friend move up closer in come closer to me you're at this table not for the food you're at this table for fellowship enter in greater intimacy and fellowship with me move closer to me that invitation is one that he gives to us now and every day that's what Jesus wants Jesus is not trying to surround himself with the power he's not jockeying for a position at the table what he wants is he wants fellowship with us and by his life his death and his resurrection and his ruling on high now he has not only made that possible but he looks forward to the day that we would be inseparable from him and so now

I can take the low seat in this life because I have that to look forward to and he knows my position may we live with this gospel ever transformed as a people who are not trying to feed our egos and his insatiable hunger but find that our ego is now fed and it's filled with him let's pray heavenly father I ask that you would take this your word your scriptures your gospel and that you would use it by the power of the Holy Spirit to make us people that are not lowly in life but we are humble in heart it's not that we are people who have come to think less of ourselves in self pity or low self esteem but we just think less often about ourselves because we know that we are on your very heart on your very mind under your very watchful eye now and forever father we celebrate your son

[33 : 48] Jesus Christ we celebrate the future day that we shall have with the feast the wedding feast of the lamb and we ask that now and in the meanwhile that you would find us looking as we take the low place looking for opportunities to celebrate with others not comparing ourselves but looking with love and wonder to you who humbled yourself and took the low seat and were raised to the high seat that we might have a high seat with you even in the heavens and this is our prayer in Jesus name amen